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Evaluation of the integrated global management initiative of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management

Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services

"IGM is still a work in progress; to date its major anticipated organization-wide benefits have not materialized"

Summary

The integrated global management initiative was launched in 2004 with the goal of improving the performance of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management. It was conceived as a collaborative norm-setting enterprise involving conference-servicing entities at United Nations Headquarters in New York, the United Nations Office at Geneva, the United Nations Office at Nairobi and the United Nations Office at Vienna.

The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) found that there had been no precise or consistent articulation of the initiative's objectives, assumptions about causality or implementation risks. Likewise, no specific measurable goals and targets had been set in explicit reference to it. Nevertheless, the Department has since implemented a wide range of operational activities relating to the initiative that involve a large number of staff at Headquarters and the other duty stations. With respect to the achievements made in connection with the initiative, staff members cite numerous collaborative initiatives and activities implemented over the past several years, as well as greater knowledge of their colleagues' circumstances at other duty stations, than they had before. OIOS found that, indeed, over time integrated global management reporting displaced the prior agenda and reporting series on Department reforms.

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In practical terms, work to implement the initiative was undertaken on two tracks that, although distinct, overlapped in terms of time and membership:

- The preparation, during the 2005-2007 period, of the compendium of administrative policies, practices and procedures for conference services, a task that entailed the work of nine separate task forces
- The establishment in 2006 of the integrated conference management system and the information technology governance board as an umbrella framework for the development of three information technology systems (global projects I, II and III) relating to:
  - Integrated reporting ("statistical warehouse")
  - Meetings planning and servicing
  - Documentation planning and processing

The compendium captured a key set of norms and standards applied by the duty stations, but its emphasis was more on administrative definitions and workload expectations. While OIOS notes the merit of documenting these, it also finds that the exercise did not result in any significant harmonization of business practices; rather, it highlighted the differences among the duty stations. After the first version of the compendium was published, the focus of the initiative became the global information technology projects. OIOS finds that one shortcoming of those projects was that they did not start with a clear commitment to the standardization of work processes. OIOS finds also that the fact that the primary focus of integrated global management implementation was on the global information technology projects, discussions on which were often cast in terms of programming languages, software vendors and applications and in-house versus external information technology expertise, may have led to the inadvertent displacement of crucial debate and decision-making on issues of internal workflow management and functional reform. Such problems certainly cannot be solved by information technology specialists.

Staff members from all duty stations put a significant amount of time into the global information technology projects. However, to date, none has yet been fully completed. Although a common software for the scheduling of meetings, e-Meets, was introduced during that time, it is not actually a product of the initiative. The "Carbon" system has yet to be introduced. As was the case prior to the initiative, the duty stations rely on separate information technology systems and platforms for different pockets of professional practice. Few benefits have been reaped by way of better management of information and reporting tools, standardized procedures and processes, or real-time global access to data.

At the same time, the instruction by the General Assembly that the initiative be implemented with due regard to respective duty station specificities involves a limitation with respect to the desirability of the standardization of disparate work practices, processes and modalities of client engagement. In pursuing the initiative, the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management never provided a concrete elaboration of how it would reconcile the accommodation of duty station specificities on the one hand with the aim of the standardization of work practices on the other. The initiative may thus ultimately have served to illuminate rather than to resolve differences between duty stations.

As duty stations are tasked with catering to a local constituency of client bodies, there are few formal incentives for sharing capacity. Although collaboration occurs informally through professional peer networks, the systems of staff and resource management do not easily accommodate a reconciliation of the costs and benefits of such capacity-sharing. The Under-Secretary-General for the Department has budgetary responsibility for all four duty stations. However, in practice there is little room to allocate funds across duty stations and outside of New York. The Under-Secretary-General also lacks any formal control over staff members. In these important respects, since 2004 there has been no progress or change.

The statistical data that the Department maintains on service delivery reside with the individual duty stations. The data embeds their respective differences in definitions. Data on service-delivery performance is inconsistent in terms of quality, comparability and reliability.

With regard to the financial savings achieved through the implementation of the initiative, at the aggregate level none are evident to OIOS on the basis of the data made available by the Department. Since 2004, neither total cost nor total volume of conference-service delivery has significantly changed. Thus, while the global information technology projects are still ongoing, to date it has not been possible to identify any "full-system" benefits.

OIOS makes five recommendations for consideration by the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management and the General Assembly.

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I. Introduction

1. In response to a request from the Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management, the Inspection and Evaluation Division of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) undertook an independent evaluation of the integrated global management initiative during the period from March to June 2009. The request for OIOS evaluation is in line with section III, paragraph 4, of General Assembly resolution 63/248. The final report incorporates the comments received from the Department on the draft report of 30 June 2009. Where appropriate, DGACM comments are reflected in italics.

2. OIOS notes that, through its former change management consulting unit, it was a party to the original formulation of the integrated global management initiative. The function has since been transferred from OIOS to the Department of Management.[1] As a condition of accepting the request from the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management to undertake the current evaluation, OIOS clearly established with the Department that the work would not be undertaken in the manner, or with any obligations to the modality, language and findings, of the prior engagement on the topic of the integrated global management.

3. Insofar as the initiative is a general management approach or paradigm without a corresponding framework involving a prior understanding of how its success will manifest itself, its effectiveness, or lack thereof, cannot be easily evaluated. OIOS notes that the implementation of the initiative has been constrained by many factors beyond the Department's control; for example, factors pertaining to mandated organizational structures and authority, constraints related to overall resources, and organization-wide human resources and expenditure-management practices. OIOS recognizes that the gestation period for the attainment of the initiative's goals may be longer than the time span of implementation to date and that the conduct of a further independent evaluation at a later stage may be warranted.

4. By way of a final introductory note, OIOS acknowledges the general validity of the comment made by the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management, as set out below:

> *It is in general readily acknowledged that reform processes in large organizations take considerable time and effort, come at significant financial cost and yield results in an incremental rather than spectacular fashion. In the case of the integrated global management, it would be fair to note ab initio that it was launched under severe constraints, e.g., all "normal" work had to continue, and very little in the way of dedicated (financial or human) resources was made available for its implementation.*

A. Background: the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management and the integrated global management

5. Under the overall direction of the Committee on Conferences,[2] to which the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management, through the

[1] Effected in 2007 pursuant to General Assembly resolution 61/275, further to its consideration of A/60/883.

[2] Further to General Assembly resolution 43/222 B.

Secretary-General, reports annually on the pattern of conferences, the mandated functions of the Department include,[3] inter alia, the provision of technical secretariat and conference-servicing support to the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, the Security Council and their committees and subsidiary organs, a number of ad hoc intergovernmental bodies, special conferences, expert bodies and meetings held at United Nations Headquarters, in New York, at the United Nations Office at Geneva, the United Nations Office at Nairobi and the United Nations Office at Vienna. At each of these four duty stations, there are three different subprogrammes[4] involved in conference-servicing work: planning and coordination of conference services; documentation services; and meetings and publishing services.

6. The Department for General Assembly and Conference Management is one of the largest Secretariat departments, accounting for approximately 15 per cent of combined Secretariat regular budget appropriations for 2008-2009[5] and comprising a total of more than 2,000 staff. For the 2008-2009 biennium, the Department's total programme of work was estimated at a total of $620.8 million (see A/62/6 (Sect. 2)). Headquarters and the United Nations Office at Geneva are the largest duty stations providing conference-management services, with 55.6 per cent of the Department's budget appropriated to Headquarters and 32.9 per cent to conference management in Geneva. The Vienna and Nairobi Offices are the smaller duty stations in the Department family and, have 7 per cent and 2.7 per cent respectively, of its programme resources appropriated to them. Beyond the four Department duty stations, there is a further tier of Secretariat duty stations, notably the regional economic and social commissions, with more limited conference-service activity, at which some calendar meetings are held and where General Assembly-mandated documentation and meetings management standards nevertheless variably apply (e.g., pertaining to the principle of equal treatment of all official languages of the Organization) (see General Assembly resolution 42/207 C).

7. In December 2001, in its resolution 56/253, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to ensure that conference services are managed in an integrated manner throughout all duty stations in the Organization. In the Secretary-General's response, in 2002 (A/57/289), the integration of global management was an initiative proposed in pursuit of improved performance by the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management and "full-system" benefits. Simultaneously, the objectives of a more integrated and proactive approach to the planning and management of meetings and documentation became embedded in the broader programme of organization-wide reforms proposed by the Secretary-General.[6] Building further on Assembly resolution 57/283 B, in 2003 the Secretary-General reported[7] on the reforms undertaken by the Department and initiated a major study on the integrated global management, to be undertaken in consultation with OIOS and with the cooperation of all four duty stations. The ensuing consulting report, completed in 2004, represented the first comprehensive articulation of the term "integrated global management" in the context of the Department.

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[3] See ST/SGB/2005/9.

[4] Corresponding to subprogrammes 2, 3 and 4 of the programme of work projected in the programme budget, most recently A/64/6 (Sect. 2).

[5] See resolution 62/237.

[6] See A/57/387, paras. 102-108.

[7] See A/58/213.

B. Evaluation scope and methodology

8. In accordance with the OIOS mandate,[8] the objective of the current evaluation was to assess, as systematically and objectively as possible, the relevance, efficiency and effectiveness (including impact) of the integrated global management initiative. In conducting evaluations, the Inspection and Evaluation Division of OIOS adheres to the norms and standards of the United Nations Evaluation Group.[9] OIOS utilized a combination of qualitative and quantitative data-collection methods, including the following sources:

(a) In-depth interviews with 191 Department staff, including management, at Headquarters and the Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi Offices; author department and Member State clients at the respective duty stations; and representatives of regional commissions;

(b) Direct observation of videoconferences and teleconferences and meetings of the Department's management, information technology governance board and task forces;

(c) Review of the available workload statistics for the 2004-2008 period pertaining to each duty station and branch of service;

(d) In-depth document review of mandates, logical frameworks and budget fascicles, as well as other official and non-official documents pertaining to details and summary records on operational work planning, management and reporting.

9. The evaluation also incorporates elements of an analysis from a recently completed OIOS audit of information and communications technology governance and security at the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management.[10]

10. OIOS is unable to vouch for the accuracy and veracity of the data provided by the Department. In the case of operational workload statistics, OIOS recognizes that the data provided embed definitional assumptions and observational variances that vary from one duty station to another. In addition, some data seem inconsistent with data on the Department published in other sources, resulting in OIOS having some reservations about the quality of the data provided by the Department.

11. OIOS notes that the evaluation has a limitation arising from the short time frame within which the exercise had to be conducted in order to enable reporting to the Committee on Conferences during the sixty-fourth session of the General Assembly. OIOS, while unable to undertake primary data collection in each substantive service area in every duty station in a manner as in-depth as would be ideal, is nevertheless satisfied that there exists sufficient evidential basis for the independent evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations.

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[8] OIOS undertakes its evaluations in reference to General Assembly resolutions 48/218 B, 54/244 and 59/272 and ST/SGB/2002/7.

[9] See the standards for evaluation in the United Nations system and the norms for evaluation in the United Nations system, United Nations Evaluation Group, 29 April 2005, available at http://www.uneval.org/normsandstandards/index.jsp?doc_cat_source_id=4.

[10] OIOS audit of information and communications technology governance and security at the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management, assignment No. AT/2008/550/01, 19 March 2009.

II. Findings

A. Raison d'être and design

12. The work of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management is central to the mandate and functioning of the United Nations as a forum for the deliberations of Member States on global affairs. The conference-servicing facilities and documentation provided by the Department represent the most direct contact that many Member States have with the formal and official work of the Organization.

13. The 2004 consulting report focused on how to integrate and manage globally the four duty stations that provide conference services under the guidance of the Department. The integrated global management approach was aimed at overcoming "inconsistencies" pertaining to the locus of authority in the Department for policymaking and conference management, and in particular the challenges of reconciling the simultaneous demands for centralization and decentralization. Further, the report noted that the demand for conference services was inconsistent throughout the calendar year and that integrated global management held the promise of ironing out the peaks and valleys of the demand for and provision of services (see A/59/133 and Corr.1).

1. Integrated global management is associated with a wide range of activities

14. OIOS notes that there is wide recognition by Department staff of the underlying conference-management goals and the relevance of integrated global management and finds that the staff have brought great commitment, professionalism and good faith to the efforts that they invested in integrated global management. OIOS takes note of examples of achievements related to integrated global management as included in the comments submitted by the Department:

(a) *The implementation of the common roster for contractual translation;*

(b) *The elaboration and entry into force of the compendium of practices;*

(c) *Global waiver management;*

(d) *Lateral transfers;*

(e) *Global document slotting system;*

(f) *Staff exchanges;*

(g) *International Organization for Standardization standards of sustainable publishing, development of full digital (print-on-demand) printing, automatic parliamentary document formatting;*

(h) *Workload-sharing;*

(i) *Significantly increased communication, information and experience-sharing among duty stations, and resulting synergies;*

(j) *Direct exercise of the authority of the Under-Secretary-General in matters relating to the elaboration and allocation of budgetary resources across all duty stations.*

15. OIOS accepts the above as a reflection of what staff associate with integrated global management and reverts to several of these items in the course of its ensuing findings. OIOS emphasizes, however, that the essential value-added that OIOS, as an independent oversight body, brings is the critical focus not on activities per se, but on the extent to which they have translated into wider change in line with original expectations and intended outcomes.

2. Operational goals and targets were never clearly articulated

16. OIOS reviewed reports of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management and the Committee on Conferences, together with pattern of conferences resolutions relevant to integrated global management and related reforms, and observes that, with respect to the integrated global management initiative, there has been no consistent or precise articulation of its ultimate objectives, assumptions about causality or implementation risks. Likewise, no specific measurable goals or periodic improvement targets have been set in direct reference to it. For stakeholders, the term "integrated global management" invokes many different connotations as regards its ultimate purpose and meaning. In this sense, integrated global management was ill-defined.

17. Regardless of the various formulations, OIOS understands the ultimate objectives of integrated global management to be identical to the goals that the General Assembly has set for conference-management services at large, that is, the attainment of the highest possible level of quality, timeliness, efficiency and cost-effectiveness.[11] These are also mirrored in the Department's reform objectives as stated in its follow-up to the original integrated global management proposal (A/60/112, para. 3). With respect to the underlying outcomes that are directly associated with integrated global management, OIOS finds that a meaningful articulation was given in the 2006 report on pattern of conferences (A/61/129, para. 9), of which OIOS also made use in structuring the findings of this evaluation: the streamlining and optimizing of operations; the sharing of resources and workload; and economies of scale.

18. It is clear that the General Assembly has noted that the performance improvement connotation that goes with the objective of the integrated global management is simultaneously paralleled by the imperatives of "equitable distribution" or "burden-sharing" among duty stations and of adhering to the principle of the equal treatment of official languages. OIOS notes the pivotal caveat placed by the General Assembly in its guidance that the integrated global management be implemented "taking into account specificities of the various duty stations and their functioning in the field of conference services, when enhancing global management" (resolution 57/283 B, sect. II.B, para. 8).

19. OIOS notes that in 2006, the Department began to dedicate a section of its annual report on the pattern of conferences to integrated global management, ceasing its earlier series of annual reports on reform efforts.[12] As corroborated by Department staff in interviews, integrated global management has become the most important reform undertaken since 2004 at the Department.

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[11] Since 2004 these goals have been reflected and reaffirmed in the following General Assembly resolutions: 58/250, 59/265, 60/236 B, 61/236, 62/225 and 63/248.

[12] Most recent reports: A/59/172 and A/60/112.

B. Streamlining of operations

1. The compendium highlighted the diversity of the duty stations

20. When the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management, in 2005, reported on its reforms (see A/60/112), integrated global management was envisioned as a two-year norm-setting enterprise, building on the proposal of the 2004 consulting report that a total of nine task forces be convened to formulate harmonized policies and practices in the areas of (a) the harmonization of statistical indicators; (b) meetings planning; (c) human resources; (d) outsourcing; (e) information technology; (f) budget and finance; (g) documentation and publishing; (h) client orientation; and (i) examinations. The planned output of the task forces was to be a compendium of administrative policies, practices and procedures of conference services that would include written documentation on the harmonized business practices. The compendium was intended to be a "living document" that would be modified as best practices were recognized and business processes settled upon. The task forces worked intensively and succeeded in compiling the compendium, an initial version of which was completed in 2006 and most recently revised in 2007.

21. The compendium provides definitions of and clarifications on a number of important conference-management terms and topics (e.g., pertaining to the workload standards that duty stations apply to language staff). As such, much of the compendium's coverage pertains to administrative and personnel management policies, standards and practices, for which it clearly has merit as a source of reference. Meanwhile, it gives much less coverage to addressing underlying work processes, vertical integration across fields of professional practice or horizontal integration among duty stations. The compendium does not, for example, resolve differences concerning the degree to which duty stations have documents edited before they are translated.

22. OIOS found that, when asked about the compendium's utility, the majority of Department staff members noted that when the compendium was produced, it was of little practical utility. Inexplicably, some staff were unaware of its existence. While the collaboration involved in the exercise was invariably valued, for some the product was viewed to have been "a source of more division than unity". Few staff members in the Department reported using the compendium to inform their work, as it documented only what they already knew. As such, the main effect of the task forces and the compendium may have been to raise awareness of differences rather than to streamline and harmonize business practices.

23. *DGACM commented that the compendium was a work in progress and that its current iteration had been found most useful for its users, for instance, to ensure that data compilation on performance indicators and workload was consistent across duty stations, and in the harmonization of the interpretation of "rules and practices". The fact that some staff members may not be aware of its existence or do not use it on a daily basis does not detract from its value or its impact on the work processes applied by those same staff members.*

2. Global information technology projects have become the focus of integrated global management, although without reform of underlying business processes

24. OIOS found that the nine task forces and the compendium process transitioned into a set of three global information technology projects under the umbrella of the integrated conference-management system, launched in 2006 following the recommendations of the study undertaken by Dalberg Global Development Advisers,[13] aimed at improving the integration of business processes and applications across the four duty stations. This was accompanied by the simultaneous establishment of the information technology governance board, with a view to coordinating, streamlining and standardizing conference processes across the four duty stations, thus promoting interoperability and efficiency (A/62/161, para. 9). The three projects are:

- Project I: integrated reporting ("statistical warehouse"), led by the United Nations Office at Vienna and Headquarters
- Project II: meetings planning and servicing, led by the United Nations Office at Vienna
- Project III: documentation planning and processing, led by the United Nations Office at Geneva.

25. OIOS found that much time and effort had been spent on the three projects. The assigned duty stations currently see the conclusion of the projects to be within reach, but recognize that there have been varying degrees of progress to date. Project I, originally perceived as the easiest of the projects, was aimed at extracting the information needed by Headquarters from the existing information technology systems used at the four duty stations, thus easing their manual reporting burden. To date, it has not been completed. The fact that there is no centralized data available for current evaluation is testimony to the lack of progress on project I. OIOS understands that a Monitoring, Evaluation, Risk Management and Statistical Verification Unit has been established within the Department, which may address issues relating to the reliability and consistency of data.

26. Project II has been partially completed. Its goal was for all duty stations to use the same software to schedule meetings. The e-Meets system has since been adopted by all duty stations. However, e-Meets precedes integrated global management, and the "Carbon" system that has been under development under project II has yet to be deployed. Meanwhile, e-Meets does not provide any linkage to document management processes.[14] Moreover, OIOS notes that e-Meets does not provide interconnectivity of duty station schedules.

27. Project III was and remains the greatest challenge, as it addresses the most complex set of issues and related obstacles. Document processing and planning is the area in which the Department has the greatest potential for reform and productivity improvements, but it requires some form of integration — vertically, within duty stations, or horizontally, across the duty stations. OIOS notes that, in the key area of document processing and planning, the Dalberg report listed three

[13] Global information technology project of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management, final report, Dalberg, 19 August 2006.

[14] Other than as noted with regard to the configuration by the United Nations Office at Vienna of its DCPMS software.

options: redevelop or somehow combine the then existing platforms;[15] take one duty station's existing software and apply it to other duty stations; or customize an "off-the-shelf" application to meet the needs of the Department.

28. OIOS considers that the lack of guidance provided by those generic options, along with the fact that the more fundamental questions of harmonized business processes and workflow integration were not resolved, contributed to the lack of progress on project III. OIOS finds that an inordinate amount of time has been spent on discussions about the relative merits of off-the-shelf software versus customization and in-house versus external information technology expertise, resulting in a diversion of efforts to deal with the underlying substance of workflow practices. A recent OIOS audit reached similar conclusions, noting that the lack of direction of the global information technology projects had resulted in the waste of both resources and time: "The Department for General Assembly and Conference Management drew plans ... which were both overly ambitious and lacking a sufficiently detailed programme and cost planning. As a result, the integrated conference management system development project entailed time and budget overruns".[16]

29. OIOS concludes that the lack of harmonization of business practices is the principal impediment to the development and/or implementation of shared information technology solutions. In pursuing integrated global management, the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management never provided a concrete elaboration of how it would reconcile the request made by the General Assembly in its resolution 57/283 B that it be implemented with due regard to respective duty station specificities on the one hand with the aim of the standardization of work practices on the other. The underlying reasons for information technology remaining on separate duty station platforms are thus the same as those that have impeded integrated global management more broadly. There is no overarching justification or clear practical benefits for duty stations to invest time and resources in the development of system-wide solutions that are suboptimal in terms of servicing the unique demands of their particular local constituency of stakeholders.

30. OIOS notes that during the course of the evaluation there was much activity in the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management regarding project III. The Department was informed (after consultations with the Chief Information Technology Officer, Office of Information and Communications Technology, and the knowledge management team) that since Documentum has been selected as the document management system for the organization as a whole, any information technology document system installed by the Department would need to be fully compatible with Documentum. Documentum will thus have to function as the "back-end" to the Department's documentation planning and processing needs. Meanwhile, the duty stations have largely ceased interim investment in their existing individual software systems. The e-DRITS system at the United Nations Office at Geneva in particular has not undergone any periodic updating. Meanwhile, Headquarters has continued to develop its documentation

[15] The Documents Control and Productivity Monitoring System (DCPMS) at the Vienna and Nairobi Offices; e-DRITS at Geneva and e-Doc at Headquarters.

[16] OIOS audit report, Internal Audit Division: 09-0203, "Audit of information and communications technology", para. 13.

planning and processing system, e-Doc. The Vienna and Nairobi Offices have been utilizing the Documents Control and Productivity Monitoring System (DCPMS), which has been adequately maintained to serve their "small duty station" needs. OIOS notes that both e-Doc and e-DRITS use the "Magic" programming language and sees no reason why those two duty stations should not be able to make a choice between the two systems, notwithstanding differences in their client-servicing needs. Given the introduction of Documentum, there will in any case be a need for developing new documentation planning and processing information technology systems. As an interim solution, there is an opportunity for the Department to consider removing a silo wall and to work towards harmonization, the interoperability of systems and the coherence of generated data.

31. *DGACM commented that project III had provided many lessons learned and that an optimized documentation system would henceforth be pursued through a thorough re-engineering of the underlying work processes in the whole documentation and publishing sector, followed and supported by a comprehensive, state-of-the-art information technology solution.*

C. Sharing of resources and workload

1. Limited efforts have been made to manage the budget in a global manner

32. There have been some limited efforts to manage budgeted resources in a global manner. First, OIOS was informed that the drafting of the budget has been more consultative between Headquarters and the duty stations in recent years than previously. Secondly, the Under-Secretary-General has begun to monitor the expenditures of each duty station throughout the biennium, to consider redeploying some resources to duty stations and to include reclassification of posts proposals in the 2010-2011 proposed budget. For example, in respect of the budget for the biennium 2010-2011, it has been proposed that posts be moved to the United Nations Office at Geneva to strengthen its capacity to service the Human Rights Council. However, as reported by the Secretary-General in 2006, (A/61/129, para. 9), while the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management has been given responsibility for the overall management of conference-servicing resources at the four duty stations, it lacks actual oversight and control over the use of common funds at duty stations other than New York.

2. Geneva and Vienna library services do not belong in the budget of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management

33. As an aside to the current analysis, but in reference to internal governance arrangements at the level of Under-Secretaries-General and the United Nations budget section as a whole, OIOS takes note of what appears to be the illogical placement in the Department budget fascicle of library services under the Offices at Geneva and Vienna. The library services are, for programmatic and reporting-line purposes, under the Department of Public Information and should accordingly be placed in the budget as such. Alternatively, if the library services at both Geneva and Vienna are to be retained under the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management as the final stage of the overall document-management workflow, the Department should be given full authority to guide and manage accordingly.

3. Dual reporting structure has resulted in the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management having limited authority over duty stations

34. In the Secretary-General's original report and proposal on integrated global management to the General Assembly, the critical challenge to be addressed was defined as "different messages about where authority lies in the conference services network" and in particular the presence of a situation where the Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management is responsible for the budgets and expenditures of all four duty stations, while in practice having little authority over how these funds are spent (see A/59/133 and Corr.1). In this respect, OIOS notes that the situation remains unchanged, namely in that the Offices at Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi are locations with conference-servicing entities that feature in the Department's budget, but are organizationally placed separately within the respective reporting lines of the Directors-General of the United Nations Offices.[17] OIOS finds that since 2004 there has been no change with respect to the ambiguities associated with the Department's dual-governance arrangement.

35. In the centralized approach to governance, the Under-Secretary-General is responsible for all the activities of the Department, for guiding conference management, including with respect to policies, practices, standards and procedures, and for the allocation of resources and the administration of Department activities at all duty stations (ST/SGB/2005/9, sect. 3.3). In this vein, the Under-Secretary-General is responsible for the combined programme budget, section 2, which includes the resource envelope for all four duty stations. On the other hand, Secretary-General's bulletins for Geneva, Nairobi and Vienna set out a decentralized approach, with the conference management division chiefs at duty stations being responsible for day-to-day operations and reporting to their respective Directors-General. That arrangement was recognized as being at the heart of the Department's management challenge at the time when integrated global management was formulated. Since 2004, there has been no change to the reporting line of the conference management division chiefs at the duty stations. The matter of any such change is clearly not within the Department's own authority to resolve. With further regard to the relevance of overall accountability and authority arrangements, OIOS reviewed all the relevant senior management compacts with the Secretary-General and found no evidence of mechanisms for coordination and alignment. For 2008, only one Director-General had included a specific reference to an integrated global management-related initiative.

4. Workload- and capacity-sharing rarely occur

36. OIOS believes that integrated global management could allow for the possibility of workload-sharing by either (a) moving people to the duty stations with higher workloads, for instance through staff loans; or (b) moving work to where staff are located, which is possible primarily in the area of documentation. OIOS found that both of these forms of workload management have been utilized in a limited manner. It also found that the workload-sharing that has occurred between duty stations is often organized by staff members through pre-existing professional networks and informal relationships and is thus not attributable to integrated global management per se. One constraint of workload-sharing noted by OIOS concerns subject-matter technical expertise that is specific to duty stations and the venue of

[17] See ST/SGB/2005/9, ST/SGB/2000/4, ST/SGB/2004/5 and ST/SGB/2009/3.

meetings of specialized entities of the Organization. This places some limits on the quantity of work that can be moved around. Commissioning-entity clients expressed a strong preference for their documents to be translated by local translators who are familiar with the relevant subject matter and with whom they liaise directly. OIOS was informed that the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management has considered using the contractual translation functions at each duty station to workload-share (e.g., to address documentation backlogs and non-priority documentation), but this has not been undertaken to a great extent.

5. Staff loans and lateral transfers

37. OIOS found that the loans and transfers that have occurred are predominantly of language staff; the loans usually involve interpreters, and the transfers either translators or interpreters. Table 1 shows the total number of staff loans between duty stations from 2004 to 2008, since the establishment of integrated global management. The loans peaked in 2005 and declined in 2006, 2007 and 2008. The volume of loans is rather insignificant relative to the Department's overall complement of almost 2,000 staff. Attribution to integrated global management is, again, uncertain; some would presumably have occurred irrespective of the initiative.

Table 1
Department for General Assembly and Conference Management staff loans from duty station to duty station, 2004-2008

2004	*2005*	*2006*	*2007*	*2008*
22	47	26	35	29

38. Table 2 shows the total number of lateral staff transfers between the duty stations from 2004 to 2008, since the establishment of integrated global management. The number has increased in the last few years, but, again, attribution to integrated global management is uncertain, especially in the light of the ageing profile of the language staff of the Department and the fact that an increasingly large number of staff have been reaching mandatory retirement age — hence the increase in vacant posts providing opportunities for transfer. In addition, the posts are usually advertised through the Galaxy system and thus are not an internal departmental integrated global management initiative.

Table 2
Department for General Assembly and Conference Management staff lateral transfers between duty stations, 2004-2008

2004	*2005*	*2006*	*2007*	*2008*
2	5	14	21	17

39. OIOS found that other factors have an impact on staff loans and transfers. Some duty stations preferred to move transportable documentation for processing at another duty station instead of having to incur travel, daily subsistence and potential replacement costs should their own duty station have unplanned needs for service.

Furthermore, the implementation of the performance appraisal system, e-PAS, which has not been applied consistently across the duty stations — the distribution of performance ratings in at least one duty station being "bell-curved" in isolation from ratings given elsewhere — thus represents a potential disadvantage for those who may be interested in applying for transfers to other duty stations.

40. Additionally, as reported to the General Assembly by OIOS in 2008 in its report A/63/94, there is no global approach to managing the recruitment of temporary assistance staff in the language services, as there are still no clear criteria, guidelines or standard operating procedures that could be used by all duty stations for the recruitment and management of temporary assistance staff. Also, owing to the lack of adequate procedures and the consequent lack of transparency and consistency in the rostering and selection of candidates, OIOS was unable to establish whether the process of the recruitment of temporary assistance staff ensured that all language services were given equal treatment and provided with equally favourable working conditions and resources.

6. Differences in work practices and processes at duty stations

41. OIOS found that Department for General Assembly and Conference Management staff were aware of the unique characteristics of each duty station, the clients they serve and how the "specificity" argument applies as a limitation to General Assembly expectations concerning integrated global management. Duty stations' first and foremost focus is on the provision and management of conference services at their own respective locations, according to the needs of their own clients. Any assistance provided to other duty stations should thus occur only after the demands of local clients have been met. Many staff members at duty stations perceive the differences between duty stations in terms of clientele, culture and structure as an insurmountable obstacle to the development of harmonized business practices. One staff member summed it up aptly: "We all do the same mix of things, but with very different emphases". As observed by OIOS through a review of documentary records and as validated by the majority of the testimony obtained from Department staff in interviews, little if any substantial change has occurred in major workflow processes since 2004. This does not mean that the respective service-delivery branches and duty stations did not implement technical adjustments over that period in the manner expected of a professional organization.

42. In terms of volume, the key to the global integration of conference management is a matter of coordination between Headquarters and the United Nations Office at Geneva, as these two duty stations combined represent nearly 90 per cent of mandated conference-management activity. They are also the venues with the most substantial element of "on demand" service delivery, in connection with the Security Council, the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council. Vienna and Nairobi, on the other hand, share the characteristics not just of a smaller relative size, but also of having a very substantial share of their work undertaken in response to a demand for non-calendar events and funded through extrabudgetary resources.

43. The fact that the Vienna and Nairobi Offices derive a large share of their funding from extrabudgetary sources has one important implication for the modality

of how they operate in terms of relating with commissioning entities.[18] At both Vienna and Nairobi, for each meeting, event or document, a total budget will be prepared and a commensurate transfer of funds will actually occur in accordance with the agreed schedule of payments.[19] They monitor costs and resource use throughout the process. As a consequence of the modality that has evolved from their dependence on (or opportunity to benefit from) extrabudgetary resources, those duty stations are, in some ways, more "responsive" to commissioning-entity requirements than Geneva or Headquarters, whose work is more squarely circumscribed by entitlements associated with the regular budget and the calendar.

D. Economies of scale

1. Conference-service system is pressured, but "peaks and valleys" are few

44. OIOS understands that when the integrated global management initiative was launched, the pattern of work at each duty station was marked by distinct "peaks and valleys" in meetings and other activities at the duty stations throughout the year. One of the premises of integrated global management was that it could alleviate these effects by sharing a schedule of meetings and sharing work and resources between duty stations, so that the "valleys" at one duty station could be leveraged to assist in addressing the "peaks" at another. OIOS notes that some "filling up" of the seasonal calendars has occurred in parallel. OIOS was informed by Department management that this may be due in part to the information-sharing and collaboration that has occurred in conjunction with the integrated global management, but is also in part an inevitable corollary of the need to accommodate additional mandated activities of the Organization; however, OIOS was unable to verify that information. Figures I and II below detail the number of meetings by month and duty station for 2004 and 2008, respectively. However, OIOS notes that while Vienna and Nairobi have "smoothed" the monthly distribution of activity, the cycle of meetings has remained fairly similar in New York and Geneva, the implication being that there is little room for work-sharing between these two duty stations.

[18] According to the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009, the United Nations Office at Vienna had 23.49 per cent reimbursable from the International Atomic Energy Agency, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization and the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization, while the United Nations Office at Nairobi had 41.1 per cent extrabudgetary.

[19] For all meetings other than those mandated through the calendar of conferences. The United Nations Office at Nairobi outlined this system in "Cost-recovery mechanism: Inter-Agency Meeting on Language Arrangements, Documentation and Publications", IAMLADP/2005/R.8, 8 July 2005.

Figure I
Number of meetings by month and duty station, 2004

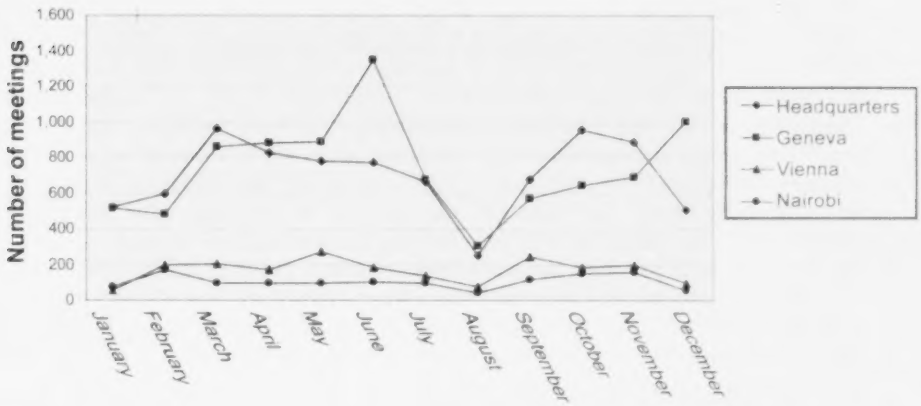
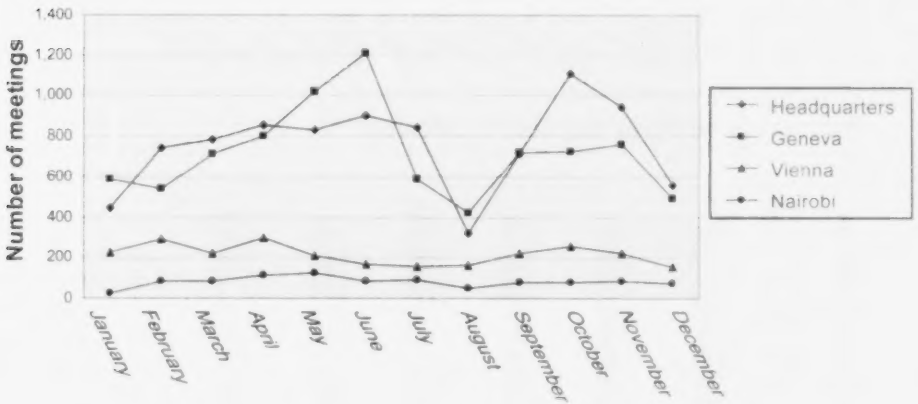


Figure II
Number of meetings by month and duty station, 2008



45. With the exception of Vienna, the number of meetings at duty stations remained stable throughout the period from 2003 to 2008.[20] OIOS found that the data on the number and pattern of meetings imply that one premise of integrated global management, that global management could result in savings by addressing peaks and valleys, was not accurate. The increase in the number of meetings held at Vienna and the small size of the Nairobi Office meant that those duty stations are unable to provide substantial support to Geneva or Headquarters during their peak times.

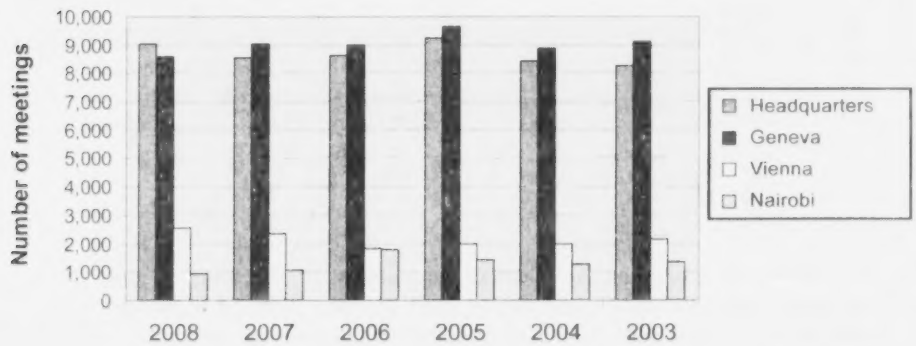
[20] The United Nations Office at Vienna had growth of approximately 20 per cent, from 2,151 meetings in 2003 to 2,570 in 2008.

2. There has been a marginal increase in combined service delivery and some smoothing of calendar "peaks and valleys"

46. By 2008, there were a total of 299 different entities mandated to receive Department for General Assembly and Conference Management services by virtue of inclusion in the annual calendar of conferences.[21] In terms of nominal volume, at the aggregate all-services-combined level, service delivery by the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management has been relatively stable since integrated global management was instituted, as a whole showing only a slight increase during the 2004-2008 period. Furthermore, the data contained in the annex to the present report show that the total number of meetings, with and without interpretation, increased by 4.15 per cent and the total number of pages processed increased by 6.72 per cent. Between 2004 and 2008, the Department reported that overall conference-service utilization rates were slightly up, from 79 to 83 per cent at Headquarters and from 96 to 100 per cent at Nairobi, and slightly down at Geneva and Vienna, from 91 to 88 per cent and from 90 to 87 per cent, respectively.

47. On average, during the period 2004-2008, the Department annually planned and serviced 6,489 meetings with interpretation and 14,822 meetings without interpretation at the four duty stations. For the same period, between all four duty stations the Department also processed, on average, 901,391 pages (see annex). Figure III below details the total number of meetings at each duty station during the period 2003-2008; 2003 data was included to show that the number of meetings remains similar to what it was before integrated global management.

Figure III
Number of meetings by duty station, 2003-2008



48. Beyond the increase in the nominal volume of demand for the work of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management, OIOS notes the possibility of change in the qualitative complexity of work, for instance with respect to the requirements of entities that are entitled to "on-demand" service, notably with the addition of the Human Rights Council and the universal periodic review in Geneva.

49. The available aggregate service delivery data mask the variances between duty stations and between more specific lines of Department service delivery, but in the

[21] An increase from 288 in 2004 (see A/59/32, A/60/32, A/61/32, A/62/32 and A/63/32).

overall picture there are relative small margins of change. Notwithstanding ample evidence of the time and effort that the Department has spent on task forces, the creation of the compendium and on the global information technology projects, OIOS does not find any evidence to support the notion of integrated global management having brought any overarching full-system savings benefits to the Organization. No doubt the five-year period of observation is fairly short relative to the complex changes that have occurred in the Department arena. With respect to the changes that have taken place in terms of overall service delivery, through, for example, the implementation of "slot dates" for reports at duty stations, multiple factors other than integrated global management will have had an influence. It is likely that some of those changes would have occurred irrespective of integrated global management.

3. "Full-system" benefits, if there are any, cannot be attributed to integrated global management

50. OIOS found that there is no hard data to support the conclusion that any full-system benefits attributable to the integrated global management initiative have occurred. None of the overall measures that OIOS reviewed in reference to the Department's combined service delivery shows a significant increase in the volume of work done during the 2004-2008 period. The sense of improved collaboration cited by many staff members is undoubtedly genuine and also a necessary component of integrated global management, but it is not sufficient to demonstrate success in terms of harmonization or that savings have occurred or otherwise been translated into the fulfilment of goals related to conference management. While the combined volume of service delivery by the Department has been relatively stable, combined resources, meanwhile, increased by a nominal 13.3 per cent from the 2004-2005 biennium to the 2008-2009 biennium, in financial terms.

51. OIOS notes that the Department has reported "performance indicators" in its reports on the pattern of conferences with coverage of select translation and interpretation items in 2007 and a "performance measurement matrix" in its 2008 report (see A/62/161 and Corrs.1 and 2, and A/63/119 and Corr.1). OIOS was unable to ascertain the precise relationship between the performance indicators and matrix on the one hand and integrated global management on the other. Furthermore, workload standards are fixed for many of the staff, including translators, revisers, précis-writers and interpreters, as documented in the compendium, and hence the scope for such performance indicators to increase significantly over time is limited. In fact, a possible unintended consequence of the documentation of the workload standard for those occupations may be that the standards have become both the ceiling and the floor for the workload, with the measurement itself leading to a decrease in morale among those categories of professional staff.

4. Summary workload statistics are of poor quality

52. In terms of enabling a summary comparison of service-delivery trends over time, OIOS finds that much of the data provided by the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management is of questionable quality. First, for several aspects of service delivery, the unit of observation has changed over time, for instance as reflected in the evolving coverage of reports on the pattern of conferences. Secondly, in reporting, each duty station has used definitions that are tailored to the unique features of its work processes. Thirdly, while some service

lines use available objective measures, for others data is based on relatively informal estimates. Finally, with respect to several items, OIOS found that the integrity of records had been compromised, for example through retroactive adjustment, and other discrepancies in record-keeping. The consolidated summary data that OIOS considered relevant to the current exercise was therefore not easily or readily available. The data contained in the annex was thus furnished through separate submissions from each of the duty stations, and those separate submissions at times resulted in varying responses for the same indicator.

53. In addition, OIOS, in reviewing the methodology used by the Department to capture client satisfaction, found that while all duty stations undertake client-satisfaction surveys, there is no standardization between duty stations with respect to the survey instruments or sampling strategies used. If the sampling process is not rigorous, it can be difficult to interpret the meaning of the survey results reported by the Department and impossible to make comparisons between duty stations. For example, in 2008, the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management at Headquarters reported that less than 3 per cent of its clients had been unsatisfied (survey respondents had indicated that Department services were of poor or very poor quality), but Headquarters uses a very passive approach to eliciting feedback from respondents. It is impossible to determine the satisfaction status of those who chose not to respond to the passive survey. In contrast, Geneva in 2007 used a purposive sampling approach and reported on client satisfaction from select clients. Vienna distributes surveys to participants in major meetings. It averages a response rate of 10 per cent and provides feedback to the staff responsible for the meeting. While it uses survey results for programme improvement, there is no evidence that those data are shared with other duty stations. Finally, Nairobi surveys those who participate in meetings with its two large clients and has found that 65 per cent of respondents rate the overall quality of conference services as excellent or good.

54. OIOS also found that while all duty stations elicit feedback from their clients, there is no evidence that the Department uses client-satisfaction data system-wide to make comparisons or to determine best practices at the duty stations. Currently, there is no central database[22] to systematically capture and analyse data. Rather, each duty station independently stores and analyses its own data. OIOS notes that the Department usually seems to use passive convenience sampling for client-satisfaction surveys, an approach that is inherently unreliable and inappropriate for capturing the true degree of satisfaction.[23]

55. *The Department commented that the implementation of integrated global management has highlighted the complexity of data collection, analysis and reporting. The Department's newly established Monitoring, Evaluation, Risk Management and Statistical Verification Unit is already grappling with and addressing the many issues being uncovered. The evaluation provides a welcome reminder of the pressing need to ensure the collection and analysis of credible and coherent data.*

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[22] Project I of the global information technology initiative may provide such a central database, but it has yet to be established and functional; see A/63/119, paras. 13-16.

[23] Convenience sampling occurs when members of the respondent population are chosen based on their relative ease of access, in this case those Member States present and willing to complete a survey.

56. OIOS found that no mechanism or tool had been utilized by the Department to attempt to track any efficiency gains or actual cost savings as part of integrated global management. The notion of any cost savings and/or efficiency gains is claimed by some Department staff members, who note that the Department has functioned in a more global manner since the integrated global management initiative; however, OIOS found that this claim of savings could not be backed by any real figures. OIOS acknowledges that present information technology tools may not be sufficient to fully track savings, but this does not excuse the fact that no attempt has been made to track any savings or efficiency gains.

III. Conclusions

57. Understandably, the focus at each duty station is on the provision and management of conference services according to the needs of their own stakeholder constituency, to whom they are primarily responsible. A corollary is the legitimate position that assistance to the other duty stations can be offered only once the demands of local clients have been met. At the same time, there is no incentive to abandon duty-station-specific practices. Integrated global management has provided an opportunity for the duty stations to collaborate and share information. However, that information-sharing has highlighted the differences between each duty station rather than brought any alignment of practices. In any case, there can be little doubt that integrated global management is still a work in progress; to date, its major anticipated organization-wide benefits have not materialized.

58. The global information technology projects have become the focus of much of the efforts related to integrated global management in the Department, but they have failed to spearhead the work of process reform and alignment at all duty stations. Technology can provide many benefits to the Department and its work and could be a useful tool for the implementation of integrated global management. However, there is a risk to assuming that technology will result in reform. There must be clear direction from leadership concerning the technology to be utilized and the overall expectations and ultimate benefits for the Department as a whole as well as for each duty station; unfortunately, this has not occurred. In order to eventually make integrated global management of United Nations conference management a reality, clear management authority is needed. The dual reporting line tension needs to be resolved, so that there can be a clear line of authority in the Department that can direct all four duty stations.

IV. Recommendations

Recommendation 1

59. **OIOS recommends that the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management be requested to prepare, for consideration by the General Assembly, a renewed articulation of the overarching objective, limitations and operational parameters of integrated global management,** the scope of which may eventually include (see paras. 16-23 and 34-35 above):

(a) The mandate of the Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management versus that of the Directors-General of the Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi duty stations;

(b) The role of conference management in the compact of the Under-Secretary-General with the Secretary-General, and consistency of conference management in Director-General compacts;

(c) The desirability of service-delivery standardization among duty stations;

(d) The role of integrated global management in conference-management reform and the development intentions of the Secretary-General.

Recommendation 2

60. **Subject to consideration by the General Assembly of the recommendation above, OIOS recommends that the Department commence preparation of an eventual comprehensive and detailed strategy for integrated global management,** the scope of which may eventually include (see paras. 16-35):

(a) A review of lessons learned and good work practices at different duty stations, and the identification and prioritization of workflow practices to be subject to standardization or harmonization;

(b) The reporting lines, roles and responsibilities of an integrated Department, including the conference managers' meeting and the information technology governance board;

(c) A timetable and transition arrangements for migration to a common information technology platform;

(d) The eventual extension of integrated global management to the wider Secretariat duty-station network;

(e) The status of, and a plan for updating, the compendium.

Recommendation 3

61. **OIOS recommends that the Department, in collaboration with the Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts, conduct a review, for consideration in the context of the forthcoming enterprise resource planning system, of the relevance, feasibility and implications of eventual future budgeting and expenditure management practices of the Organization, drawing upon the experience gained by the United Nations Office at Vienna and the United Nations Office at Nairobi with regard to the principle of price-setting, accounting, funds transfer and/or other reconciliation of funds pertaining to: (a) the commissioning entities' use of calendar as well as non-calendar conference-management facilities and (b) workload- and capacity-sharing among duty stations (paras. 36-43).**

Recommendation 4

62. **OIOS recommends that the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management, in collaboration with the Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts, the Department of Public Information and other relevant Secretariat officials, articulate the merits of the General**

Assembly consideration either to move library services at Geneva and/or Vienna from the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management, section 2 of the programme budget, to the Department of Public Information (sect. 27), under whose functional guidance and substantive supervision the service currently operates; or, alternatively, that library services be placed under the authority of the Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management (para. 33).

Recommendation 5

63. **OIOS recommends that the Department should consider, after due cost-benefit analysis, interim information technology arrangements that would reduce both the resources spent and the proliferation of silo applications and utilize any existing applications so that efficiencies and cost savings are achieved (paras. 24-31).**

64. *The Department commented that the cost-benefit analysis of such an initiative is accepted and hopes that the development of a new document-management workflow can be conducted in a span of time sufficiently short to obviate the need to introduce yet another generation of discrete document-management systems.*

(*Signed*) Inga-Britt **Ahlenius**
Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services
21 July 2009

Annex

Select workload statistics of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management, 2004-2008

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Meetings held with interpretation	**6 391**	**6 532**	**6 542**	**6 294**	**6 686**
Headquarters	2 986	3 316	3 267	3 193	3 271
Geneva	2 597	2 286	2 414	2 327	2 636
Vienna	487	589	508	572	549
Nairobi	321	341	353	202	230
Meetings held without interpretation	**14 172**	**16 024**	**14 408**	**14 777**	**14 731**
Headquarters	5 427	5 907	5 351	5 357	5 771
Geneva	6 300	7 658	6 329	6 805	6 218
Vienna	1 517	1 379	1 318	1 784	2 021
Nairobi	928	1 080	1 410	831	721
Number of documents translated into six languages	**54 716**	**55 589**	**54 689**	**52 651**	**53 802**
Headquarters	30 458	31 441	31 981	30 358	30 595
Geneva	14 868	14 521	13 823	13 569	13 894
Vienna	5 626	6 079	5 678	5 742	6 340
Nairobi	3 764	3 548	3 207	2 982	2 973
Total number of documents processed	**34 987**	**36 638**	**34 819**	**33 607**	**33 297**
Headquarters	13 113	12 579	12 908	12 715	12 719
Geneva	10 292	10 299	10 282	9 852	10 038
Vienna	10 896	12 794	10 680	10 261	9 860
Nairobi	686	966	949	779	680
Total number of pages processed	**860 263**	**881 061**	**872 457**	**975 138**	**918 039**
Headquarters	340 708	318 193	346 443	353 261	371 196
Geneva	274 394	330 462	334 818	422 796	334 451
Vienna	220 724	207 414	165 817	173 416	190 564
Nairobi	24 437	24 992	25 379	25 665	21 828
Total number of pages printed					
Headquarters	*	*	423 503 404	392 674 261	391 098 814
Geneva	302 785 000	261 852 000	275 213 000	227 546 000	254 278 000
Vienna	38 162 000	39 778 000	37 836 000	32 059 000	35 272 000
Nairobi	*	*	*	*	*

* Data not provided by the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management.